

the good fortune of having a number of bright, loyal, and hard working individuals on my staff. One such individual is James O. King, now serving as Democratic Staff Director of the Senate Rules Committee, who is retiring on June 7.

Jim has been a very good friend to me for many years. He worked with me back when I served as Governor of Kentucky, came with me to Washington as one of my Administrative Assistants, and was Staff Director of the Rules Committee for 8 years.

He has served the Commonwealth in a number of roles in public administration, including working under no less than five Kentucky governors. In addition, he served in a number of capacities in higher education in the Commonwealth, including Vice President for Administration and also Administrative Assistant to the President of the University of Kentucky.

It seemed that no matter what job title he held, Jim was always working in public service, always trying to give something back.

We here in the Senate have been recipients of some of the fruits of his labor. Jim was a key person in 1988 to help the Committee review Senate rules and procedures. Under his direction, the Rules Committee has addressed a number of major pieces of legislation including the motor-voter bill and campaign finance reform. And all the while, he was still keeping a eye on the "nuts and bolts" of the Senate operation.

Anyone who's ever come in contact with Jim knows that he loves Kentucky, its people and its way of life. And, from what I understand from reliable sources, he's already getting in the swing of retirement by posting some of the best golf scores he's had in recent years!

We're going to miss Jim on the Rules Committee. And I know I'm speaking for my staff, the Rules Committee staff, and the Senate as a whole, in thanking him for his good work and wishing him all the best for his retirement.

WAS CONGRESS IRRESPONSIBLE? THE VOTERS HAVE SAID YES

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, on that November evening in 1972 when I learned I had been elected to the Senate, I made a commitment to myself that I would never fail to see a young person, or a group of young people, who wanted to see me. In the nearly 23 years since that election night, I have been inspired by an estimated 60,000 young people with whom I have visited.

Most of them have expressed concern about the enormous Federal debt that Congress has run up for coming generations to pay. Almost without exception the young people and I discuss the U.S. Constitution which forbids that any President spend even a dime of Federal money that has not first been authorized and appropriated by both the House and Senate of the United States.

Mr. President, I have been making these daily reports to the Senate since February 22, 1992. I began because I wanted to make it a matter of daily record the precise size of the Federal debt. As of yesterday, Wednesday, May 24, the Federal debt stood at \$4,887,785,166,023.46—\$18,554.12 for every man, woman, and child on a per capita basis.

MR. JEFFERSON WAS RIGHT: GOP BUDGET PROVES IT

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, there has been a great deal of phony and highly partisan criticism of the Republican budget proposal—criticism which the liberal news media have hastened to circulate. However, polls show that the majority of American people are not misled, except those who insist that they are entitled to something for nothing.

To their credit, Republicans in Congress have delivered on their commitment to come forth with a budget to—First, balance the Federal budget in 7 years; second, cut Federal spending by \$961 billion; third, eliminate 140 Federal departments agencies and programs; fourth, freeze salaries of Members of Congress; and fifth, cut the Senate staff budget by 15 percent.

Mr. President, the American people obviously realize the dire financial straits into which our Nation has plunged as a result of decades of irresponsibility by those in charge of their Federal Government. But children understand the penalty for spending more money than they have in their piggy banks.

I have an example to share, a poignant letter from the sixth grade class of Swain County West Elementary School in Bryson City, NC:

DEAR SENATOR HELMS: Our teacher shared with us your letter which mentioned the Federal debt as of March 14, 1995, which was \$4,846,819,443,348.28.

We are amazed to see how large the Federal debt is and understand that anything that is "free", the working people pay for. We don't have much, but our class sends this collection to you and ask that you put it in the fund to reduce the Federal debt. Our generation is going to have to reduce this debt and we would like to begin our part now. We really want to help our country and as sixth graders we understand that you can't leave it up to somebody else to take care of what we must begin now."

Mr. President, enclosed with this letter came a check for \$44.75, emphasizing the obvious if these sixth graders in North Carolina can recognize the importance of balancing the federal budget, why can't Congress?

Needless to say, I greatly admire these young people and their teachers. Implicit in their letter is an obvious question: If politicians cannot live up to promises to balance the budget, the politicians perhaps should be called home to smell the coffee, if I may be

permitted to mix a couple of metaphors.

Mr. President, it is difficult to remain silent amidst false charges by the President and various Senators of his party that the Republican budget will cripple Medicare, the health care system upon which so many of our elderly have been encouraged to depend. Contrary to the false prophets, the Republican budget allows Medicare spending to increase each year by 7.1 percent.

Mr. President, the American people should always have realized that there is no such thing as a free lunch. Thomas Jefferson said it best:

To preserve our independence, we must not let our rulers load us with perpetual debt. We must make our election between economy and liberty, or profusion and servitude.

Mr. Jefferson also warned:

The question whether one generation has the right to bind another by the deficit it imposes is a question of such consequences as to place it among the fundamental principles of government. We should consider ourselves unauthorized to saddle posterity with our debts, and morally bound to pay them ourselves.

Mr. President, that just about says it all, especially when one considers the moral injustice we are heaping upon our children and their children. This year Republicans made a promise to balance the budget. We should keep that promise. Balancing the Federal budget is simply a matter of doing what we were sent to Washington to do.

ERNEST K. KOPECKY

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, Ernest K. Kopecky has served as construction manager for the Architect of the Capitol and the Congress of the United States for 17 years. He began his service in 1978 and will retire this year. His tireless and unselfish efforts have contributed to the completion of many construction projects in the Capitol and in other buildings in the congressional complex and in maintaining and preserving the structures that house the legislative and judicial branches of the U.S. Government.

Under Mr. Kopecky's direction, such notable and historically significant projects as the restoration of the pedestal for the Statue of Freedom that crowns the Dome of the Capitol building and restoration of the Bartholdi and Neptune fountains have been successfully completed.

As a dedicated public servant, Ernest Kopecky has set an example for others. His genuine concern for quality of work and efficiency of those he supervises, his willingness to assist others, and his reputation for responsive service have brought great credit to the Office of the Architect of the Capitol and reflect positively on his colleagues in that office.

I congratulate Mr. Kopecky on his distinguished career and wish him well in his retirement.

COMMERCIAL SPENT FUEL STORAGE

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, dangerous nuclear leftovers from the cold war and the commercial spent fuel storage problem present the U.S. with two major environmental challenges. An explosion at the liquid high-level waste storage tanks at Hanford could result in a catastrophic nuclear accident, and electric utilities are running out of space for storage at commercial nuclear reactors. Although these are separate problems, the solutions are related. Unfortunately, President Clinton is AWOL (absent without leadership), and the DOE is playing legal games instead of taking responsibility for taking the commercial spent fuel by 1998. It's time for a comprehensive solution.

First, let's review the facts:

Thirty thousand tons of spent nuclear fuel is being temporarily stored at powerplants at 75 sites.

In less than 3 years, 23 reactors will run out of space in their spent fuel storage pools.

By 2010, a total of 78 reactors will have run out of space.

We've already spent 12 years and \$4.2 billion to find permanent high-level repository and conduct site characterization at Yucca Mountain.

DOE will decide if Yucca Mountain is a suitable site for a permanent repository in 1998. If it is, DOE will file for license in 2001. DOE has told us that the odds of the site being suitable are about 80 percent. However, DOE has also indicated that the odds of getting a license for a permanent repository under our existing laws are about 50-50, and probably much worse. These odds are not good enough to bet the taxpayer's money on.

Still, the fact remains that, if after 3 to 6 years more work at Yucca Mountain, and a total expenditure of at least \$9 billion on our nuclear waste disposal program, Yucca is either found not to be suitable or licensable, we have nowhere to turn. We currently have no contingency plan for waste storage. We will simply have to start over.

Meanwhile, the President and DOE are dragging their feet. DOE has recently issued a "Final Interpretation of Nuclear Waste Acceptance Issues," reaffirming its earlier position that its contracts with the utilities to take waste by 1998 are not enforceable in court. DOE has also asserted that it has no authority under existing law to site an interim repository. DOE has missed the point. While DOE is focusing on legal technicalities to avoid its obligations to the American people, we have had no suggestions from DOE regarding solutions to this problem.

Although we have been told that DOE is studying the issue, all we have heard from the administration is a refusal to support any pending legisla-

tion at this time. I have received no response to my letter to the President requesting that the administration engage on this issue in a meaningful way.

Finally, the State of Nevada and the Nevada congressional delegation remain opposed to the location of any nuclear waste facilities in their State.

It is time to take a comprehensive look at the problem based on two basic principles: First, the Government must meet its obligation to take spent fuel by 1998 or as soon thereafter as practical. The ratepayers have paid for it. They deserve performance, not excuses. Even if it is found to be suitable, Yucca Mountain will not be ready before 2010. Therefore, interim storage of spent fuel is needed. Although there is nothing unsafe about the storage of spent fuel at reactor sites, for reasons of both economics and safety, we must consolidate our 74 spent fuel storage sites into 1 or 2.

Second, the U.S. must continue efforts toward a permanent geological repository. While we can keep alternatives such as deep seabed disposal and transmutation alive (if Yucca is found unsuitable), our long-term goal remains geologic disposal.

This raises a more difficult question: Where do we locate central interim storage? I would suggest the best location for an interim storage facility would meet the following criteria:

Spent fuel should already be there.

There should be adequate land area.

The Federal Government should already own the land.

There should be transportation infrastructure.

There should be a security infrastructure.

A skilled work force familiar with handling nuclear materials should be available.

A nuclear safety/worker protection infrastructure should be in place.

The location(s) should be in general proximity to the Nation's reactors, i.e., one for the East and one for the West.

The new economic activity associated with spent fuel management may address concurrent job losses.

After all of these considerations are evaluated, the relative costs of the alternatives should be taken into account.

Locations that meet the above criteria include some of our existing DOE weapons facilities. Geographically, the most likely candidates are Hanford and Savannah River. There are other important factors about Hanford, and Savannah River—each contain nuclear materials dramatically more dangerous than spent commercial fuel safety contained in dry casks. For example, Hanford has 61 million gallons of liquid high level wastes in 177 underground tanks—some of which have leaked or are leaking. Under certain conditions, one or more of these tanks could explode, resulting in a catastrophic nuclear accident. Also at Hanford are 4,300 metric tons of plutonium in various forms and locations, con-

taminated reprocessing facilities, corroding and possibly dangerous DOE nuclear fuels, and a contaminated plutonium finishing plant just to name a few. Savannah River has five closed reactors, two contaminated reprocessing facilities, and a variety of liquid and solid radioactive wastes.

Despite the very real environmental health and safety risks that exist at Hanford and Savannah River, fiscal pressures are forcing us to cut the overall cleanup budget even as we squander millions of dollars cleaning up low risk sites to comply with environmental regulations designed for a perfect world. As Ivan Selin, Chairman of the NRC, said last week, Prioritization of the cleanup at DOE sites, based on an assessment of risk to the public and the cleanup workers, isn't happening to the extent it should.

Finally, Hanford and Savannah River already have spent nuclear fuel. Not the safe, stable nuclear fuel found in commercial power reactors—but military fuel designed to be quickly reprocessed to make plutonium. When we abruptly shut down plutonium production, this military fuel was left in limbo. Today it sits, corroding, in pools at Hanford and Savannah River . . . 206 metric tons at Savannah River, and 2132 metric tons at Hanford.

To review the situation, we need one or two centralized, dry cask storage sites for spent commercial nuclear fuel, until Yucca Mountain or another permanent geologic repository is ready. We have spent military fuel at Hanford and Savannah River—along with a host of other environmental problems—that demand attention despite declining dollars and misplaced priorities dictated by current environmental statutes. Employment at Hanford and Savannah River is dropping. The local communities are feeling the economic pinch, the activity at Hanford and Savannah River is shifting from defense production to environmental restoration.

Hanford and Savannah River meet all the criteria listed earlier:

Spent fuel is already there.

There is adequate land area.

The Federal Government already owns the land.

There is transportation infrastructure.

There is security infrastructure.

There is an available, skilled work force that knows how to handle nuclear materials.

There is a nuclear safety/worker protection infrastructure in place.

Savannah River is conveniently located with respect to civilian power reactors in the east, and Hanford is convenient to reactors in the west.

The new economic activity associated with spent fuel management will help address economic declines in the area.

The new dry cask storage facilities may even help safely contain the more dangerous spent military fuel that exists at both sites.